



Music Forward's Movement to Improve Life Outcomes for Underserved Youth: Championing Career & Technical Education

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*Music Forward's Movement to Improve Life Outcomes for Underserved Youth:
Championing Career & Technical Education*

Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.) Capstone

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To the Harvard Graduate School of Education
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education Leadership

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Abstract

This Capstone for the Doctor of Education Leadership (Ed.L.D.) Program captures my Residency experience as a Program Adviser for the House of Blues Music Forward Foundation (“Music Forward”) in Hollywood, CA, an autonomously running 501(c)(3) organization, and the only non-profit operating within Live Nation’s ~\$8Billion family of companies. Music Forward runs five key programs (one of which I developed and piloted during Residency) serving diverse youth aged 12-22 in eight underserved regions across America, with the mission of “accelerating real-life skills for youth using music as the bridge to successful careers.”

In this Capstone, I combine research and reflection from the field to bring the core task of my Residency to life: leading the design (or redesign) and implementation of programs and initiatives that help youth translate the skills they have gained from Music Forward’s programs into promising jobs and careers. Through a Review of Knowledge for Action (RKA), I surveyed the literature across Career and Technical Education (CTE); Personalized, or student-centered learning; and STEAM (Science, Technology, Education, Arts, and Mathematics) education. Based on my research, interviews with practitioners, and professional experience in the field, I argue that in order to best deliver on its mission, Music Forward should partner with specific schools within its target-demographic; namely, those who have adopted CTE school-models that are STEAM or “Arts, Media and Entertainment” (AME) based with an emphasis on student-centered learning, given these schools’ propensity toward career preparedness, collaboration, and collective impact.

Given the critical role of multi-party collaboration in ensuring the success of Music Forward’s programs, I utilize a “collective impact” framework as a tool for analyzing the organization’s relationship with (and dependence upon) strategic partners. Ultimately, I conclude that Music Forward must act as a collective impact convener to optimize its impact on a student’s

life and career outcomes. Finally, I discuss Music Forward's urgent need to secure funding to support the continued growth and sustainment of career pathway related initiatives.

I. Introduction

Overview of Music Forward

The House of Blues Music Forward Foundation (henceforth “Music Forward”, “MFF”, or “the organization”) is a twenty-three-year-old 501(c)(3) organization headquartered in Hollywood, CA and “dedicated to accelerating real-life skills for youth using music as the bridge to successful careers.” Music Forward delivers on its mission through five primary national programs targeting underserved youth aged 12-22 in Cleveland, Ohio; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Houston, Texas; Las Vegas, Nevada; Los Angeles, California; New Orleans, Louisiana and Orlando, Florida. Given MFF’s reengineering of its mission and programs over the last 2.5 years, as well as its rebranding efforts under the new leadership of Executive Director Marjorie Gilberg, Music Forward can be considered a new non-profit. This [digital report card](#) provides a snapshot of Music Forward’s impact and key programs, which are united around a vision to create access and opportunity for youth who are historically underexposed to (and underrepresented in) the live entertainment industries. Music Forward “sets the stage” for success by “providing workshops and showcases to kick-start musical careers; fulfilling musical dreams by equipping dedicated young musicians with instruments; and inspiring the next generation of music industry leaders with hands-on career exploration.” The organization’s key programs are:

1. Bringing Down the House (BDTH) – a multi-week artist incubator providing talented bands or solo-acts within our target demographic in-depth exposure to the music business as well as opportunities to collaborate and perform on professional stages.
2. UForward – Short for “University Forward,” this careers-focused program runs one academic year and is designed to expose youth to the array of career opportunities within live entertainment – ranging from stage hands, to production managers, to sound engineers, to entertainment lawyers,

and more. Resume-building workshops, job-shadows, career panels, interview simulations, tours, and more are offered within House of Blues venues and Live Nation corporate offices that MFF gains access to nationwide.

3. UForward Bootcamp – a 3-day, ~10-hour job and interview readiness module focused on preparing a resume and professional pitch, as well as practicing professionalism and behavioral interviews.
4. All Access – a “live entertainment field trip” that enables youth to “tour venues and discover careers in the industry” that do not require a stage presence or musical talent. All Access is a highly flexible, inexpensive, and inspirational program that is done year-around, reaches more than 2,000 students nationwide, and often serves as a gateway into other programs.
5. Give Music – a holiday-themed giveaway of 250+ high-quality instruments to targeted musicians nationwide. MFF’s outreach strategy includes screening application letters to ensure that instruments reach the hands of young people with both high need and high potential. Instruments often change the college and career trajectories for recipients by providing them the chance to pursue collegiate scholarships or a professional career in music.

My third through fifth day in Residency at MFF corresponded with the MFF management team’s annual strategic meeting, wherein one and three-year goals were set forth. MFF’s strategic goals for 2017 centered on “becoming known” in the music industry as an innovative non-profit that provides live entertainment career preparedness to underserved and diverse youth. The team aspired to realize this vision by building on the early successes of its key programs to: form strategic partnerships (regionally or national) and expand these programs into new markets; bolster the recruitment, engagement, and retention of volunteers nationwide; create career pathway opportunities for program alumni in partnership with secondary schools, CBO’s, colleges, and employers; raise the public profile of the organization through key public relations campaigns and

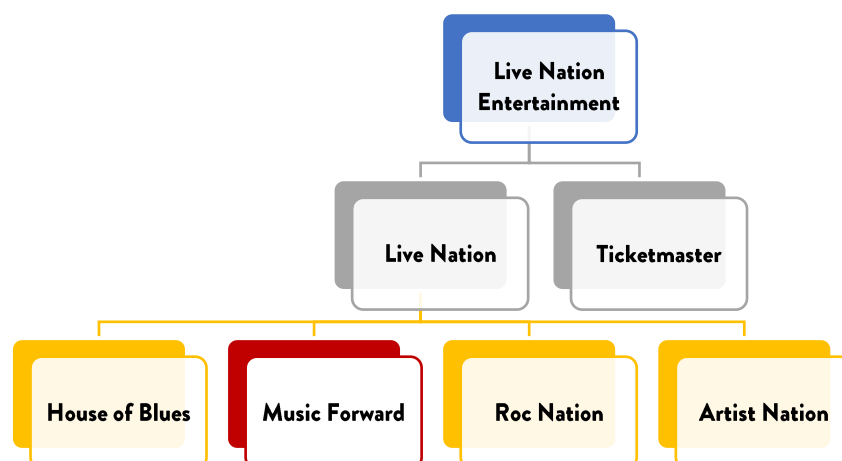
marketing strategies; and boost annual development efforts through innovations in fundraising and new initiatives/events.

Music Forward's Unique Context

On the one hand, Music Forward is a traditional 501(c)(3) working in schools and communities nationwide via its four direct-service programs designed to prepare diverse youth from underserved communities for successful careers by leveraging the lure of live entertainment to deliver a hands-on curriculum centered on soft-skills, critical thinking, and business. With ~1.5MM in 2015 revenue, Music Forward falls slightly below the average size of public charities in America, according to the National Center for Charitable Statistics (NCCS, 2016). Like most non-profits, MFF's smaller size and robust programming requires the organization to fundraise aggressively year-over-year.

On the other hand, MFF is situated within Live Nation Entertainment (LNE) – the largest music conglomerate in the world – and works closely with LNE's family of companies, including Live Nation, Ticketmaster, and of course, House of Blues. Exhibit 1 below provides a helpful (albeit non-comprehensive) visual of the companies beneath the LNE umbrella, including Music Forward.

Exhibit 1



One of Music Forward's unique traits is that it simultaneously works with/within schools and communities, as well as with/within live entertainment venues and corporate offices. MFF constantly breaks the barriers between these institutions by inviting each into the other's world – ranging from hosting programs at House of Blues venues or Live Nation corporate offices, to hosting a volunteer day at a partner school in which volunteers from LNE participate.

As industry leaders seek to understand what is happening in schools, or organizations serving students in the Arts, Media, and Entertainment (AME) space seek to keep a pulse on the live entertainment industry (i.e. namely schools with an AME focus or non-profits like Music Forward whose work connects industry to education), MFF has a pulse on what is happening in both arenas, creating a vantage point (and advantages) that few non-profit organizations can boast. This fortunate situation, coupled with strong programs, leadership, branding, and a national presence, positions Music Forward to bridge the gap between an employer's need for diverse and qualified talent, and the school's need to provide students with the exposure, access, and soft-skills to put their best foot forward in pursuit of post-secondary, life/career-enhancing opportunities.

My Role

As a Resident, I worked autonomously on my strategic project yet remained in weekly communication with Music Forward's staff. I collaborated most closely with Music Forward's Director of Programs, Laura Clark (my direct supervisor, based in Las Vegas, NV); as well as Executive Director, Marjorie Gilberg (Hollywood, CA). I also served as a member of the management team, which included the aforementioned leaders as well as National Program Manager, Nazanin Fatemian (Dallas, TX); Director of Operations, Elisa Morimoto (Hollywood, CA); Director of Development, Christibelle Villena (Hollywood, CA); and now-former Director of Communication & Collaboration, Nate Anderson (San Francisco, CA). Finally, I was in

frequent contact with all nine (now-eight) Program Coordinators located across Music Forward's markets.

My Residency role centered on identifying what the ideal, post-secondary career opportunities are for our program participants and alumni, and ensuring Music Forward's programs (and programs team) is best prepared to support alumni along their career trajectories. This role can be thought of in three phases: phase one was the identification of ideal, post-secondary career opportunities. Phase two was the process of backwards planning from these career opportunities to ensure our programs (e.g. offerings and curriculum) and strategy (e.g. partnerships or human resources) are best preparing MFF youth to pursue these opportunities. Phase three, or "the pilot phase," was the process of implementing new programs, programmatic revisions, or initiatives born out of phase 1 and phase 2.

In practice, my project involved gaining internal buy-in from the management team for Career and Technical Education (CTE) school-models, identifying which of these CTE schools would allow us to optimize a strategic partnership (more on this criterion later), and working with schools to leverage our shared value (in terms of access, curriculum, and relationships with employers, colleges, and CBO's) to enact a career-pathways philosophy and approach to our partnerships. To extend the scope of MFF's focus into post-secondary opportunities, I designed and implemented one new program (UForward Bootcamp); initiated one new initiative (The Live Entertainment Advisory Board); and prepared a strategic plan for a future program (Career Forward); collectively, these activities were designed to promote seamless transitions into live entertainment career pathways for our program participants (and alumni).

In the *Review of Knowledge in Action (RKA)* of this capstone, I will first explore the research on Career and Technical Education (CTE) with an exploratory focus on the efficacy of

CTE, personalized learning, and STEAM-focused schools (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts & Mathematics). My review of the literature will help elucidate how, when, and in what circumstances CTE schools and school models are best positioned to enhance the life and career opportunities for all students. In the *Strategic Project Description*, I lay out the scope of the work that I did during my Residency. In the *Analysis and Findings* section I share my findings about the ways in which (and to what degree) CTE schools in California, especially those with an Arts, Media, and Entertainment (AME) focus may present synergistic opportunities for Music Forward. Finally, I share implications for my future leadership, for Music Forward, and for CTE and STEAM partnerships in the sector.

II. Review of Knowledge for Action (RKA)

Research Questions

Music Forward's work at the intersection of the education and live entertainment industries, coupled with its career-focused programming, warrants an exploration of Career and Technical Education, personalized learning, and STEAM education (STEAM is a movement to integrate "Arts" into STEM-focused initiatives – i.e. Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics). Overall, these topical areas will help us explore trends and initiatives in the PK-12 education sector most relevant to Music Forward's focus: career-oriented education in the arts (i.e. creative industries). The following research questions will inform this RKA:

1. What is CTE, and what is the historical and present context that informs its contribution to American public education and education reform?
2. What is personalized learning, and what is the historical and present context that informs its contribution to American public education and education reform?
3. What is STEAM education and why is the transition from STEM to STEAM significant?

CTE History & Present Day

Career and Technical Education, or CTE, evolved from what is historically known as Vocational Education (VE), or a form of schooling centered on occupational training geared toward specific industry (or agricultural) trades (Kreamer 2014; Phipps et. al. 2008; Wang 2009; Boone 2011; Hyslop 1999; Bowles and Gintis 1976). While scholars largely agree that VE took root in American public schools at the turn of the 19th century, there are various interpretations regarding the impetus for VE, including: the need for trade schooling as an economic response to America's shift from an agrarian to an industrial economy (ACTE 2016; Brewer 2009; Phipps et. al. 2008); a desire of large corporations to destroy and disempower the considerably powerful labor

unions and their workers as a means of resource control and exploitation (Bowles et. al. 1976; Hyslop 1999); and a desire to respond to the influx of immigrant and working-class children by creating a system of stratification within a broader agenda of maintaining class structures (Bowles et. al. 1976; Hyslop 1999). It is noteworthy that some scholars observe a distinction between two 19th century movements: the “trade school” movement (vocational education) and the “practical arts” movement, which similarly “provided skill based learning by providing unique curriculum such as domestic science...,” however “continued to stress the importance of general education” (Barlow 1974, qtd. in Hyslop 1999). While this nuanced distinction (and the term “practical arts”) has been largely lost in common discourse and debate around the educative efficacy and equity of VE, it is helpful historical context for understanding: a) why VE is highly criticized for its alleged erasure of general education and literacy; b) the type of progressive, “practical arts” that admired scholars such as John Dewey advocated for (commonly referred to as “experiential education”); and c) why CTE, which aligns itself with the “practical arts” philosophy, is situated within a complex history and politically charged environment (ACTE 2016; Fletcher 2012; Kreamer 2014).

The Smith-Hughes Act in 1917 was a major act of legislation and set a precedent of federal-state funding toward VE, as well as the designation of VE as a “separate” and “distinct” form of schooling (Rejewski 2002; Hyslop 1999). The shift in standards from VE to CTE did not emerge until the 2009 Perkins IV Act (Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act, or “Perkins”), where federal law and career-education funding “require states to use state-established, industry-validated career and technical skill standards” (Rejewski 2002; Stone 2009). However, many institutions and scholars protested that these standards are non-existent in many states; that there was no general consensus around what “technical skills” means; and that measurement was largely subjective (Stone, 2009). Moreover, many practitioners struggled to embrace a new conception of

VE, which had historically been relegated as “second-class” and for the “less-able” students (Fletcher, 2012; Hamilton, Malin, & Donald, 2015; Kreamer, 2014; Pathways to Prosperity Report, 2014; Wagner, 2015).

Today, CTE seeks to center learning around medium to high-skill jobs and calls for “rigorous academics,” “real world technical skills,” “work-based learning,” “personalized supports,” core subject matter learning; exposure to various jobs and industries; skill-building; career exploration; a work-based learning continuum; “intensive practicum experiences” (e.g. internships); and career counseling/guidance (EducateNow YouthForce NOLA RFP, 2015). Similarly, former Secretary of Education Arne Duncan offered that CTE provides “instruction that is hands-on and engaging, as well as rigorous and relevant” (Gallup, 2015); and Rep. James Langevin (D) added “CTE is an investment in the future of our economy, our workforce and our country” (qtd. In Gallup, 2015). These descriptions align with those offered by the Association on CTE (ACTE) and related institutions, such as Jobs for the Future, who prefer the term “career-focused schools” (ACTE 2016; JFF 2016).

Especially in the last decade, “it has become cliché to say that it is an eventful time for CTE, but only because it continues to be true...in 2013 all but three states had some legislative, regulatory, or administrative action around (advancing) CTE,” which has been a “key feature” of the Obama administration’s educational priorities (Kreamer 2014; JFF 2016; Pathways to Prosperity Report 2015). Enabling organizations and think-tanks such as Jobs for the Future (JFF) and the Pathways to Prosperity Initiative, born out of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, are taking root in increasingly more regions across America and helping state and local institutions bolster their CTE efforts via “program design and implementation; labor market information and

training;” the construction of “learning networks; financing strategy; and policy assessment and alignment” (JFF, 2016).

Agriculture and industry have responded with equal excitement and investment in the CTE movement. A recent Gallup-Lumina poll found that business leaders valued “applied skills in a specific field” far more than a prospective employee’s major or school (Gallup, 2017). Despite CTE’s alignment with workplace demands, “only about one in four students (28.6%) earned five or more CTE credits, according to the most recent data from the National Center for Education Statistics,” and “few [students] are immersing themselves into CTE programs” (Gallup, 2017). Business leaders such as Stewart and Lynda Resnick, owners of the Wonderful Company, have attempted to trail-blaze a path forward for other companies by establishing their own CTE network comprised of four agricultural prep academies and seven middle school CTE academies (Wonderful Company, 2017). In 2016, I attended a Wonderful Company convening of leading policymakers, corporate executives, and CBO’s in the state of California focused on CTE, and heard from a cadre of influential leaders – ranging from the VP of JP Morgan Chase to the Mayor of Sacramento – who have pledged dollars, passed legislation, and pioneered programs and initiatives centered on CTE in the state of California. While other states in America are similarly championing CTE, California’s valiant effort to grow the CTE sector is a promising indicator of CTE’s potential to reach the mainstream of education reform. In their efforts to bring CTE to scale, CTE reformers are relying on other movements that are gaining “STEAM” in education, including personalized (or student-centered) learning, as well as STEAM education, or bolstering a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics curricula by integrating the arts. As such these two modern movements warrant further exploration.

Personalized Learning

The Glossary on Education Reform offers a neutral and all-encompassing definition of a polarizing term: “the term personalized learning, or *personalization*, refers to a diverse variety of educational programs, learning experiences, instructional approaches, and academic-support strategies that are intended to address the distinct learning needs, interests, aspirations, or cultural backgrounds of individual students” (edglossary.org 2015). However, education reformers have co-opted the term “personalized learning” to signify two starkly different agendas. One camp, whose conception of “personalized learning” is outside of the scope of this RKA, centers on “blended learning” models which blend teacher-student interaction with computerized instruction that assesses and modifies learning modules based on student performance (Horn & Staker 2011; Heinz 2004; Pederson & Liu 2003). Proponents of this model argue that students receive consistently “personalized” instruction tailored to their specific skill gaps, whereas critics of this model argue that this form of learning actually *de-personalizes* instruction, compromises 21st century skills (e.g. collaboration, socialization and teamwork), and limits non-computerized forms of instruction (Heinz 2004; Jeong So & Brush, 2007).

The other definition – which is consistent with the connotation of “personalized learning” adopted in this RKA – is used synonymously with “student-centered” or “learner-centered” instruction and promotes a classroom wherein “educators promote collaborative work among groups of students; integrate learning experiences that occur outside the classroom; and, above all, foster learner independence and student voice and choice, or student agency” (JFF & CCSSO 2015; Nanney 2004). While this camp is not opposed to computerized instruction, it sees computerization as an opportunity to complement or enhance social interaction and collaboration, versus promoting individualization by way of isolation.

Personalized, learner-centered instruction finds its root in John Dewey's conception of "experiential education" which traces back to the early 20th century, "yet [has] never been implemented at scale" (JFF & CCSSO 2015). In his 1920 text *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, John Dewey makes a case for the need for experiential education by juxtaposing this hands-on approach with the approach taken in the majority of American public schools, which "merely accumulate brute facts...occupies itself laboriously with mere details, but never inquires into their meaning or consequences—a safe occupation...for it never contemplates any use to be made of the observed facts" (Dewey 1920). Eighteen years later in his 1938 landmark essay *Experience and Education*, Dewey's comments foreshadow why personalization would require a century-long paradigm shift in educational pedagogy and philosophy, in order to resurrect as the modern movement that we know today:

I assume that amid all uncertainties there is one permanent frame of reference: namely, the organic connection between education and personal experience; or, that the new philosophy of education is committed to some kind of empirical and experimental philosophy. But experience and experiment are not self-explanatory ideas. Rather, their meaning is part of the problem to be explored. To know the meaning of empiricism we need to understand what experience is. The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuine or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other, for some experiences are mis-educative (Dewey, 1938).

Amid efforts to confront the challenges preventing the education sector from a radical departure from formal education, the "renewed interest in personalized, learner-centered education today builds from a powerful combination of economic, scientific, egalitarian, and technical forces...[and] a better understanding of what truly constitutes college and career readiness for an ever-changing, global marketplace" (JFF & CCSSO 2015).

Among the scientific forces cited above include a burgeoning base of neuroscience research aimed at highlighting the efficacy of learning-centered pedagogy and the "close connection between motivation, agency, and learning" (JFF & CCSSO 2015; Dubinsky et. al.

2013; Lom 2012). Nanney adds that these instructional approaches differ from “traditional teacher-centered, subject centered environments in that they provide complimentary activities [which are] interactive in nature, enabling individuals to address their own learning interests and needs and move forward into increasingly complex levels of content to further their understanding and appreciate their subject matter” (Nanney, 2004). For example, Big Picture Learning, an organization that champions personalization within its own network of schools, has now served “over 26,000 nationwide,” offering an “innovative model of education that is personal, relevant, and authentic” and enabling “high school students to work with their advisors and field-based mentors to design their personalized learning programs” (MPR 2012). According to a research study conducted by UMass and the Nellie Mae Foundation, “respondents largely asserted that student-centered learning practices promote student engagement and facilitate learning that is relevant to students” (Reif et. al., 2015). However, “some educators fear that not all students are held accountable for their learning, especially in competency-based systems” ((Reif et. al., 2015).

STEAM Education

The “STEAM” movement and acronym was born as a reactionary response to the “STEM” movement –the popularizing of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) reform initiatives – in the American education sector; many felt that this movement happened at the expense of “Arts” education (Robelen 2011). However, as opposed to merely adding “Arts” into the list of subject areas, STEAM advocates offer that STEAM is “Science & Technology, interpreted through Engineering & The Arts, all based in Mathematical elements” (Yakman et. al. 2012; STEAMedu.com 2015). This definition speaks to the integration and interdependence among STEAM disciplines (versus the mere *multidisciplinary* nature of STEM), while underscoring the critical role of the arts in facilitating interdisciplinary learning (Yakman et. al.

2012; STEAMedu.com 2015). Moreover, STEAM reformers explain that “the A stands for the broad spectrum of the arts going well beyond aesthetics; it includes the liberal arts, formally folding in Language Arts, Social Studies, Physical Arts, Fine Arts & Music that each shape developments in STEM fields” (Yakman et. al. 2012; STEAMedu.com, 2015).

Other STEAM reformers would highlight the critical role of “design” in the arts. The Rhode Island School of Design (RISD), for example, is one among the host of corporations and institutions that embrace STEAM with the intention to: “transform research policy to place Art + Design at the center of STEM; encourage integration of Art + Design in K-20 education; [and] influence employers to hire artists and designers to drive innovation” (STEMtoSTEAM.org, 2017).

Research on STEM seems to provide evidence that STEAM may foster more holistic and relevant learning for students of all ages. For example, in a study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts, and cited by MSU (a large proponent of STEAM education), “researchers found that 93 percent of the STEM graduates reported musical training at some point in their lives, as compared to only 34 percent of average adults,” as well as “higher-than-average involvement in visual arts, acting, dance, and creative writing” (Parker et. al. 2013). Researchers also found that children who were “exposed to metal work and electronics” – or career-focused pathways in their youth – “were 42 percent more likely to own a patent than those without exposure;” “those involved in architecture were 87.5% more likely to form a company;” and “children with a photography background were 30% more likely to have a patent” (Parker et. al. 2013).

Researchers of this study justify their findings by asserting that the hands-on activities that youth were exposed to nurtured “out-of-the-box thinking,” while the subjects of the study themselves “reported using artistic skills – such as analogies, playing, intuition, and imagination

– to solve complex problems” (Parker et. al. 2013). Similarly, in a 2013 issue of Science Direct, authors of an article entitled “Rethinking STEM Education: An Interdisciplinary STEAM Curriculum” offer the following:

Conversations with industry leaders discussing characteristics they wish were cultivated in students suggest that they are looking for people think outside the box, work in teams with people with diverse expertise, and approach problems both divergently and convergently...There are also movements to encourage legislators to support the arts because of their role in fostering innovation. In fact, there is a United States Congressional Caucus on STEAM co-chaired by Representatives Suzanne Bonamici and Aaron Schock. Recently a briefing by a number of arts organizations addressed integrating arts education with STEM in order to stimulate creativity in students in K-12 (Madden et. al. 2013)

Such research studies, coupled with the pioneering efforts from institutions such as RISD, have moved politicians to introduce policies aimed at promoting STEAM, including a House resolution brought forth by U.S. Representative James Langevin (a Democrat) highlighting that “the innovative practices of art and design play an essential role in improving STEM education and advancing STEM research” (qtd. in Robelen 2011).

RKA Conclusions

Career-focused schooling

Despite a century of birth pains, CTE has blossomed into a promising prescription for an excellent and equitable education in America (Wagner 2014; Kreamer 2014; ACTE 2016; JFF 2016). CTE data, some of which was is cited above, demonstrates the increasing efficacy of CTE year over year as measured by superior graduation and employment rates compared to outcomes for non-CTE public school students (Plank et. al., 2008; Packard et. al., 2012; Kreamer 2014). Based on statistics offered by the ACTE and New York State Department of Education, only about 6% of secondary school students in New York (166,231 out of 2,652,283) are enrolled in CTE schools (NYSED, 2014). One Brooklyn-based public CTE school, George Westinghouse, promotes a project-based, hands-on environment that emphasizes entrepreneurship, career-

readiness, and innovation –and boasts alumni such as The Notorious B.I.G., Jay-Z, Busta Rhymes, and DMX, four of Hip-Hop’s most successful entertainers and businessmen (InsideSchools.org 2016; Svokos 2014). When CTE enrollment was closer to 5% in the 90’s, four of music’s icons benefited from being in a *doing* environment – far from the norm in America’s remaining 95% of non-CTE schools. Obviously, one cannot draw a causal relationship between CTE and life outcomes based on the few anecdotes above. Nonetheless, the stories mirror data purporting the efficacy of CTE and seem to support the pedagogues who argue that career-focused, personalized, and arts-infused high schools are uniquely positioned to transform life outcomes for youth.

Moreover, my survey of various reforms initiatives in this RKA deepens my belief that our industrial-age, factory model of education, characterized by the learning environment as an isolated classroom; teacher-as-isolated-expert; student as isolated subject; subject-matter as isolated discipline; and disciplinary knowledge assessed by isolated student-exams; is fundamentally at odds with the type of learning environment required to usher America into a new age of social, economic, and political prosperity (Kreamer, 2014; Wagner, 2015; King, 2016; YouthForce NOLA, 2015; Pathways to Prosperity Report, 2014). Most education reformers would generally agree with this premise. If this is true, then one should question the efforts to salvage a long-expired prescription for the development of America’s future workforce – efforts ranging from technological improvements, to charter networks, to standards-based reforms and incentive-grants – which aim for incremental improvements within non-CTE public schools. It seems that better teachers; “better” students (sadly, this is one approach); better standards; better pedagogy; better technology; better assignments; and better assessments; have been the sectors response to the worst of schooling as we’ve ever known it, despite a general agreement that these may not all

be the best priorities to begin with (Wagner, 2015). In his book *Creating Innovators...*, Tony Wagner offers colorful metaphors to drive this point home:

If our conversations, school strategic plans, and national policies revolve around how we make the current system better, we are doomed. These reforms are akin to putting all of our efforts into making a covered wagon go fast enough to win the Indianapolis 500. And with no discernible progress, our education dialogue ends up devolving into a blame game, with teachers' unions serving as the piñata" (2015).

Even studies aimed at demonstrating the effectiveness of CTE tend to rely heavily on standardized exams as a measure of comparison between CTE and non-CTE graduates, despite the fact that many reformers question the relevance of standardized exams and the overall validity of such comparisons. I believe the sector would benefit from the addition of more longitudinal studies centered on college persistence, employment rates, and overall life satisfaction among graduates of career-focused schools. Such a comparison between graduates of career-focused and non-career-focused schools would be an important measure of educational effectiveness and relevance for 21st century high school graduates.

Personalization and STEAM

While experts and practitioners in the field share enthusiasm, optimism, and strong anecdotal support for student-centered, personalized instruction, the verdict (much like with modern career-focused schooling and STEAM education) is still in progress regarding the effectiveness of personalized instruction. Nonetheless, personalization characterizes an ethos that is at the heart of career-focused models and various reform initiatives, including STEM and STEAM. More specifically, at the heart of career-focused and STEM or STEAM initiatives is a kinesthetic philosophy that promotes project-based, real-world, and student inquiry-driven instruction. However, in the absence of robust research studies – especially randomized control trials (RCTs) focused on isolating the impact of personalization, as well as longitudinal studies to

determine the efficacy of personalization over time – it will be difficult to justify increased funding, policy, and large scale support/adoption of student-centered model.

Moreover, it is important to note the evident conflict inherent in the popularization of “personalization” by two different camps of education reformers. As a researcher, it was a bizarre experience reading through dozens of articles and witnessing two popularized camps use the same term to promote starkly different agendas while not acknowledging each other’s presence (indeed, it was a similar experience reading articles about STEM vs. STEAM, though these two camps address each other head on). Aside from breeding confusion within the sector and stifling collaboration, these philosophical battles detract reformers from having critical conversations about such things as the pros and cons of similar methods; common challenges; and potential shared value that may best serve youth.

For example, in the blended learning models, how will schools continue to prioritize and uphold the value of teacher-student relationships, collaboration, and community? If the aforementioned values are not a priority to advocates of computerized learning, then what are the potential ramifications this way forward? Conversely, in a student-centered construction of personalization, how will reformers address the human capital demands of a high-touch, individualized curricula? Who (in traditional public schools) will provide the often-specialized expertise required of personalization that is responsive to the needs and interests of youth, when even career-focused schools struggle to recruit talented professionals who can cater to the unique pathways offered by the school? For STEM-focused schools, how will these models respond to the demands of students and industry, both of which are seeking to nurture creativity and resurrect the essential role of art in reflecting the challenges and opportunities within society? For STEAM-focused schools, how will schools ensure that art is not perverted as solely a means of privileging

STEM fields, and continue to honor the needs of students who are inclined to focus primarily on the arts? These questions are but a sample of those that both describe our current dissonance while attempting to help us to transcend the current tug of war between adults, to embrace each other's strengths, and to approach our current challenges as a balanced and united frontline of education reformers.

Theory of Action

As detailed in the *Introduction* section, Music Forward set the goal of “becoming known as an innovative non-profit...” and identified the activities that must be successfully completed in order realize its broader vision for 2017 and beyond. Among these stated activities, the two that most directly informed my role as a Resident and Program Adviser are: “create career pathway opportunities for program alumni in partnership with secondary schools, CBO's, colleges, and employers” (my primary focus); and “form strategic partnerships (regionally or national) and expand these programs into new markets” (my secondary focus). These organizational goals, coupled with insights gleaned through my RKA, help set the stage for my Theory of Action:

If I:

- Leverage research from the field to gain support from Music Forward's Executive Director and Programs Director around narrowing the focus of our strategic partnerships with low-income schools to specifically target CTE schools focused on personalized instruction within arts, media, and entertainment, and who have robust partnerships within community-based organizations and industry partners within arts, media, and entertainment;
- Develop criteria for identifying and evaluating the aforementioned target schools;
- Support Music Forward's program coordinators in facilitating these partnerships;

- Revise preexisting programs and design new programs or initiatives to promote seamless transitions into career-pathway opportunities for Music Forward's youth participants and alumni;
- Successfully pilot this initiative in Los Angeles, CA in partnership with LAUSD, secondary schools within the district, employers, and CBO's;

Then I Will:

- Succeed in helping Music Forward to create career pathway opportunities for program alumni, which can be scaled nationwide, and better position the organization to scale its programming, increase its visibility and public profile, and raise funds from supporting institutions.

III. Analytic Frameworks

The Collective Impact Model

In their groundbreaking 2011 Stanford Review article, John Kania and Mark Kramer helped popularize the notion of “Collective Impact” (CI), or “the commitment of a group of important actors from different sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific social problem” (2011). The authors explain that Collective Impact transcends collaboration by involving “a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process to lead to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities among all participants” (Kania and Kramer 2011). As explained by Collaboration for Impact, a think-tank for research related to collective impact models, Kania and Kramer call for a “backbone organization” to provide the centralized infrastructure and assume primary responsibility for executing on the common agenda, in ways that are highlighted in the following framework:

Exhibit 2

The Collective Impact Model



Given MFF's reliance on multi-party collaboration (as discussed in the introduction), it is useful to evaluate the organization's strategic partnerships and program execution vis-à-vis this framework. In looking at the elements of the Collective Impact Model, it is clear that MFF has both the interest and experience to adopt the role of the "convener." However, it is neither feasible for the organization to adopt the role of the "backbone" nor to expect that another organization will have the resources required to carry this burden. (Kania and Kramer call for the backbone to be a well-resourced and autonomous arm of the organization – and this is not financially feasible, at least in the near-term MFF could designate a staff person to mediate between interested and like-minded organizations although it cannot afford to set up an "arm" to focus on CI.

As such, MFF's construction of collective impact may be more closely aligned with a broader definition offered by FSG, the non-profit consultancy: "organizations from different sectors agree to solve a specific social problem using a common agenda, aligning their efforts, and using common measures of success" (FSG 2017). Regardless, analyzing the more rigorous standards promoted by Kania and Kramer (as well as their disciples) may serve to hone MFF's ability to distinguish between collective impact and mere collaboration, and better position itself to execute on the former.

Notably, businesses have played a critical role in successful collective impact (CI) initiatives. In the Stanford Review article entitled "The Role of Business in Collective Impact," Allen Grossman and Ann Lombard surveyed community leaders of a CI initiative in Salt Lake and found that "96% [responded] that business was either critical or very important to their work" (2015). The authors site several examples of business involvement in CI efforts, including the "cradle to career" initiative in Cincinnati, and reveal that business leaders' investment in CI is related not only to their "desire to improve public education" but also CI's "focus on measurable

outcomes, use of data-driven decision-making, and potential to change how educators and the community work together toward shared goals” (2015). With direct access to the largest conglomeration in live entertainment, Music Forward’s involvement in a robust CI initiative has the potential to attract major private sector support, including from Live Nation Entertainment companies.

Work-based Learning Model

The transition from a Collective Impact (CI) framework to the Work-Based Learning model can be thought of as a transition from viewing Music Forward’s work from “the helicopter,” or at a high-level, into viewing the work “in the weeds,” or on the ground. In other words, whereas the CI framework speaks to Music Forward’s philosophical approach to partnerships and programs, the Work-Based learning model addresses the pedagogical approach that must be present in Music Forward’s programs. Accordingly, as the organization seeks to create meaningful CTE experiences for MFF’s youth participants, particularly experiences that rely upon industry partnerships that relate to potential career pathways, the following framework designed by the YouthForce NOLA team may serve as a useful tool. Since this model is used to highlight YouthForce NOLA’s interventions at various stages of a young person’s trajectory toward work-readiness, Music Forward may benefit from using the model to determine where it has historically intervened, where it presently intervenes, and where it aspires to intervene in the future (along a young person’s trajectory). In doing so, the model may help MFF evaluate its curriculum and serve as a rubric for assessing the trajectory of its work-readiness programming.

Exhibit 3

An Integrated Framework Work-Based Learning

	Awareness	Exploration	Training	Practicum	Career /Post-Secondary Ed
Definition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student can name industries and careers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student develops understanding of specific industries & careers; student selects career pathway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student develops knowledge and skills necessary for attainment of a given credential 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student applies knowledge in workforce setting and confirms fit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student obtains full-time employment or enrolls in post-secondary education
Current and Planned Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curricular connections • Educator awareness • Early career and college planning • City-wide marketing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skills expos • Site visits • Job shadowing • Summer camps • Career panels & fairs • After school programs • Life skills (e.g., financial literacy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coursework • Certification / credentialing • Soft skills training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internships (incl. soft skills application) • Work/jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student continues to build skills and education, and plans for upward mobility within career/sector

Items in **bold type** are currently in implementation or pilot in more than one school.



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In the context of Music Forward, the organization's programming largely spanned the first two dimensions on this continuum: Awareness and Exploration. Part of my strategic project was to lay out the vision and begin piloting programs or initiatives that would be designed to extend MFF's impact along this continuum into dimensions of "training," "practicum," and "career/post-secondary education." However, within these realms are activities that MFF does not see itself as best positioned to provide, such as credentialing or providing internships at-scale (MFF does provide a limited number of internship opportunities). Therefore, this tool will be a useful way to assess which activities MFF plans to integrate into its business model, and which it plans to outsource to strategic partners.

As such, I will attempt to put this tool "in conversation" with the CI framework above in order to assess the extent to which partnerships are integrated across different constituencies (high schools, community colleges, employers, CBO's), given that some organizations are better positioned than others to deliver on some of the "current and planned activities" detailed herein.

IV. Description, Evidence, and Analysis

The What

In October, I flew to Philadelphia, PA with a coworker to attend the annual *Made in America* Festival, among the largest Live Nation owned and operated festivals in the world. While strolling through the festival grounds, we heard a DJ from the “Skate Stage” announce the next band: “*Red Letter Day!*” followed by screams and applause from a sea of fans. My coworker was shocked; Red Letter Day had just graduated from our *Bringing Down the House* (BDTH) program a year prior and was now gracing one of the largest festival stages in the world, unbeknownst to us.

Though my strategic project disproportionately focuses on MFF’s *UForward* program (and not BDTH, given its niche focus on artist development), this anecdote illustrates some of the key questions that MFF hired me to help answer: “What are our alumni doing?” “How should we track them?” (These first two questions are less in my wheelhouse). And what about all of the alumni of our programs who aren’t as fortunate as *Red Letter Day* – how is Music Forward supporting them in their next step toward pursuing a successful career (whether on the stage, off the stage in live entertainment, or in a different industry altogether)? This final question captures the core of my strategic project.

Except in rare instances where Music Forward hired alumni, or staff informally contacted alumni of our programs to feature them in our marketing collateral or connect them to specific career opportunities, the organization’s last touch-point with program participants historically occurred on the last day of the alumnus’ program. While other staff members have begun to assume responsibility for tracking our alumni (which coincides with our organization’s transition onto *Salesforce*, a relationship management software with unique tracking capabilities), I have laid

out recommendations for what “next-step opportunities” Music Forward should champion as viable career pathways that MFF is well positioned to support alumni in pursuing, as well as what additional programming should be introduced to support these transitions (specifics below).

As noted in the *Introduction*, the three phases of my role can be summarized as illustrated below:

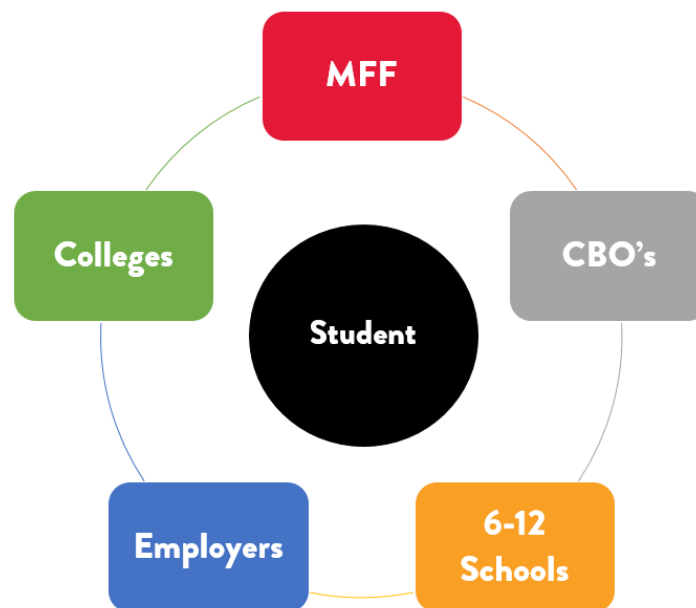
Exhibit 4



To this end, the concept of “vertical integration”, commonly used in the private sector and defined by Google Inc. as “the combination in one company of two or more stages of production normally operated by separate companies,” is a useful mental-model for understanding my project. Specifically, just as a company “vertically integrates” when it seeks to control more steps in the supply chain of a product (which often helps to maximize efficiency and profitability), so too does Music Forward seek to ensure that it is strategically situated within the education “supply chain” of our underserved youth demographic to maximize the “efficiency” and “profitability” the youth will gain given MFF’s limited capacity and resources.

To make good use of this analogy, the Music Forward “company” should be considered to include the partners – schools, venues, community-based organization’s, and more – that allow MFF to leverage a collective impact approach to maximize the return on its investment in youth. Exhibit 5 below provides a visual of the aforementioned key stakeholders that MFF must analyze its role in relation to. Again, collective impact here is defined as occurrence in which “organizations from different sectors agree to solve a specific social problem using a common agenda, aligning their efforts, and using common measures of success” (FSG).

Exhibit 5



As mentioned in the *Analytic Frameworks* section, I argue that Music Forward must serve as the “convener” or “integrator” by leveraging strategic partners and their resources so to integrate these resources into Music Forward’s career-focused programming. For example, a Music Forward 8th, 9th, or 10th grader is eligible for multiple MFF programs, but will likely be a participant of the *All Access* program (two-day career-exposure program including a field-trip to the venue). MFF will partner with middle/high schools and an Live Nation Entertainment venue (usually the House

of Blues) to create this experience. By targeting a CTE Arts, Media, and Entertainment (AME) school within its target demographic, Music Forward will be working with students who are more likely to maximize learnings in a short 2-day career-oriented experience. In the “Integrated Framework for Work-Based Learning” in Exhibit 3, this program best aligns to the “Awareness” and “Exploration” phases of work-readiness.

For example, I recently coordinated an *All Access* in which students from a stage production course at the East Los Angeles School of Performing Arts (ELAPA) visited The Wiltern, a House of Blues venue, and asked targeted questions about lighting and stage building that facilitated their deeper learning. This demonstrates the mutual value that Music Forward and ELAPA offered each other. However, in the absence of MFF’s continued support and programming, the school and venue will not adequately prepare these youths to find a good job or internship, as most of these sites do not provide basic job-readiness skills such as résumé writing and behavioral interview practice. In other words, without career-focused intervention from Music Forward, these students will typically not receive the support needed to transition into the “Training” and “Practicum” stages of the work-based learning framework as reflected in Exhibit 3.

In 10th, 11th, or 12th grade, these same MFF youth will be eligible for all programs; a select few will partake in *UForward* (the career-prep program for a cohort of ~10 in each UF city, per year); *UForward Bootcamp* (the 3-day condensed version of *UForward* that I am piloting in LA with 30 students per cohort); or *Bringing Down the House* (the musician incubator for ~6 bands or solo acts in each BDTH city, per year). In an effort to go to scale and reach more students, Music Forward continues to make critical changes to its programs and reimagine the future of programs such as BDTH. *UForward Bootcamp*, the program I designed, was born out of this vision – and is

expected to roughly ten times more students than UForward in each of its locations (~120 students per city, per year, versus ~12 students per city, per year). Thus, to make these programs a success, MFF must engage preexisting and new partners. The preexisting partners include the same schools and (usually) the same LNE venues. However, MFF will also need to engage professional volunteers to serve on panels, as mock interviewers, and as mentors. In some cases, MFF will need to engage CBO's to assist with targeted recruitment and added support for student participants. For example, in the case of *UForward Bootcamp*, MFF partnered with Unite LA from the LA Area Chamber of Commerce, who will award three of our staff (including myself) a job-readiness facilitation certification via their free "train the trainer" program. In turn, we will be able to equip graduates of our *UF Bootcamp* and *UF* programs with a job-readiness certificate signed by the Mayor of Los Angeles, thus further legitimizing their experience. These program experiences represent the deeper learning phases – such as "Training" (soft skills, certification, etc.) – as reflected on the work-based learning framework.

In this example a young person's "life-cycle" with Music Forward, we see how MFF serves the role of convener or "backbone organization," which "takes on the role of managing communication" and substitutes its partners in and out based on the programs demands. Since Music Forward's Program Coordinators are on the ground (and in most of our communities, the sole person in the community and on the ground), as well as building strategic partnerships with the stakeholders represented above, they are best positioned to galvanize collective resources in service of our student populations.

My project also involves identifying which of these CTE + AME schools serving our target demographic possess satisfactory curricula and support (from aforementioned stakeholders) to warrant our participation, meaning that 1) we will be filling a void for our partner (e.g. lack of

engaging, career-focused programming for students) that we are uniquely positioned to fill; and that 2) the prospect of partnership will maximize the chance of a successfully “integrated” collective impact model in which students are receiving the required supports from different stakeholders and organizations as they travel “vertically” toward their career aspirations. The ideal is to nurture long-term strategic partnerships with these schools built on shared vision and values, thus strengthening our impact year-over-year (criteria explored below).

Within my first couple weeks, MFF’s Director of Programs (and my supervisor) shared a strategic project proposal with a list of some of key responsibilities and tasks. I had the opportunity to revise and modify portions of this proposal, though she and I were largely in agreement about what tasks should take priority within the broader goal of my strategic project. These tasks included:

- Interviewing secondary school leaders, especially those focused on career and technical education, leaders within institutions of higher learning, and entertainment industry businesses and professionals;
- Analyzing current employment trends in the industry to provide recommendations, including:
 - Identifying key career pathways based on employment outlook
 - Identifying 5-8 organizational or corporate career pathways partners at the national/regional level (including their profiles), as well as secondary school and higher education partners (regional).
 - Identifying potential project funders/sponsors,
 - Integrating career pathways transitional programming/curriculum into existing MFF program models

- Creating processes for initiation and facilitation with career pathways partners that allow Music Forward to support entry into school and/or workforce across multiple MFF service locations
- Identifying associated technology needs/tools required for implementation
- Identifying budgetary considerations, benchmarks, data tracking, and participant outcomes
- Providing other recommendations as determined by research and interviews.

Moreover, the proposal specified that my career pathways research and outreach efforts may include investigation into the following areas of opportunity:

- Internship partners
- Professional mentoring & peer mentoring opportunities
- Workforce development opportunities
- Training programs, co-op, or apprenticeship programs
- Professional mentoring/grooming specific to MFF musical alumni (BDTH/GM)
- Others as informed by research findings

The How

Serendipitously, my first week at Music Forward coincided with the management team's annual, 2-day strategic meeting in Hollywood. This gave me the opportunity to meet and converse with all members of the management team (particularly the directors working remotely in other regions) and ask many targeted questions regarding MFF's key 1-year and 3-year strategic goals (which were the focal point of the strategic meeting). One major takeaway from the strategy session was the MFF management team's shared belief and excitement that it was time for Music Forward to "become known," while ensuring that the public perception of Music Forward reflects

our commitment to improving the life/career skills of young people by leveraging live entertainment as a vehicle versus a destination. For example, it is important to MFF that external stakeholders would *not* inaccurately describe our programs as music-education programs, but rather highlight the life-skills and career-focused nature of our programs.

Hearing the leaderships unwavering commitment to career development served as a critical foundation for my thinking and approach to my strategic project. Namely, I walked away from the strategic meeting with a strong intuition that CTE would be central to my work, and reached out to my cohort-mate Mark Martin, Resident at Jobs for the Future, for recommended readings and resources that would help me ramp up my knowledge of the CTE world. Subsequently, I spent the next several weeks reading books related to CTE and non-traditional schooling, conducting online research, and continuing to learn about Music Forward's history, evolution, and organizational context (such as where MFF sat in relation to Live Nation's family of companies, what the key divisions were at Live Nation, House of Blues, and Ticketmaster, and who some of the individuals were in Live Nation Entertainment who we should nurture relationships with). I also spent considerable time in Music Forward's hard drive, reading through curriculum, budgets, professional developments, and more, to gather as much knowledge about Music Forward's program and organizational identity as possible.

Exhibit 6 below builds upon the visual highlighted in Exhibit 2 above to further detail my approach:

Exhibit 6

<u>PHASE</u>	<u>RELEVANT DELIVERABLES</u>	<u>PROGRESS</u>
<u>Diagnose</u>	Initial research findings and recommendations for our national “Pathways” strategic approach.	Complete and delivered as PPT presentation. Updated PPT to be submitted by end of residency.
<u>Design</u>	<i>UForward Bootcamp</i> Program Curriculum and Launch, Live Entertainment Advisory Board, Live Nation’s US Concerts Partnership, <i>Career Forward</i> Program Strategic Plan	<i>UForward Bootcamp</i> Curriculum: complete; final tweaks being made. <i>LNE Pathways</i> : complete. Outreach being made. Advisory Board: largely incomplete; outreach to potential board members upcoming.
<u>Deliver</u>	LA Launch of <i>UForward Bootcamp</i> Program in LA; <i>LNE Pathways</i> Partnership Program in LA	School partners and leadership identified. Calendar set. Preparing for launch.

Diagnose

The diagnostic period of my strategic project lasted roughly twelve to fourteen weeks. As alluded to above, it involved a combination of independent research, site visits (schools, colleges, and employers), interviews, professional development, and dozens of conversations, and culminated in an extensive PowerPoint (PPT) presentation. The PPT honed in on several key goals. The first was infusing a new paradigm and vocabulary into Music Forward centered around the CTE movement, as well as promising CTE, AME schools serving our target demographic and

demonstrating strong potential within the CTE space. The second was highlighting the enormous undertaking of a pathways program designed to support *all* program alumni (given the geographical and demographical diversity, such as whether or not they attend college), thus elevating the importance of a narrowed focus. The third was presenting an overview of how our pathways strategy may vary from market to market based on a number of factors, including (but not limited to) how prevalent CTE and AME schooling is in the region and how well resourced and connected Music Forward is in the region (more on criteria below). The fourth was brainstorming program innovations and new program designs, while the fifth was laying out a pilot vision and timeline for LA. The sixth was exploring potential strategic partnerships at the regional and national level, as well as the identification of key stakeholders. And the seventh and last was provoking discussion about the implications that the “Pathways” initiative would have on the roles of other staff, especially Program Coordinators, but also members of the management team.

Design

With help from my ED, I reached out to key HR personnel within Live Nation and House of Blues to gauge their interest in a pipeline partnership, which would grant interviews to the alumni of our programs for seasonal or part-time roles within LNE’s theatres, amphitheaters, and other concert venues. These roles would include production, facilities and maintenance, guest services, box office, guest facing roles, security, ticketing, concessions/restaurant staff, and more. We were delighted to receive excitement and cooperation from the two divisions I contacted – the *North American Concerts* (NAC) division of Live Nation Entertainment, as well as the *Clubs & Theaters* division of House of Blues Entertainment. With support from the management team and the HR directors of these divisions, we prepared a strategic plan (process and timeline) for reaching out to these GM’s, connecting them to our students, scheduling interviews, and more.

Internally, I continued to explore what programs or innovations could be put in place to ensure a baseline level of readiness for the alumni who would interview with our partners. Specifically, we knew that graduates from our UForward Program would be better prepared (on average) to interview for jobs than alumni of our other programs, given UForward's focus on career pathways and job-readiness skills. But how could we ensure that alumni of *All Access*, *Bringing Down The House*, and *Give Music* were also prepared?

To this end, I created a Pathways Manual which outlined (among other things) the eligibility requirements for our pathways program (i.e. the minimum qualifications required for alumni if they wish to capitalize on interview opportunities with our partners). These requirements were developed based on my assessment of what the minimum components are of UForward's curriculum that alumni of our other programs would need in order to make them similarly competitive candidates as alumni of UForward. Of course, this is built on our assumption as an organization that UForward adequately prepares its program participants for certain entry-level roles – and assumption that will need to be tested over time.

To this end, I designed a new program called *UForward Bootcamp*, which allows Music Forward to scale our pathways program by condensing key curricular components of UForward into a job readiness module, thereby eliminating the majority of its costs while narrowing its focus to target preparation for the interview process, including resume development, a personal pitch, and behavioral interview practice. *UForward Bootcamp* preserves some of the excitement and live entertainment focus of UForward by including mock interviews conducted by LNE HR professionals at our concert venues, as well as by featuring a panel from within the entertainment industry.

Moreover, as we continue to explore career-pathway partnerships for the students we serve that transcend our relationships within LNE, I believed (and learned from the field) that it would be useful to assemble an industry advisory board comprised of key stakeholders from within live entertainment who can weigh in on the nature of our programs and help us birth new relationships, initiatives, and opportunities. I am currently assembling the roster of key stakeholders and the project plan for rolling out the first advisory board session at the end of Q1 in 2017.

Finally, based on my findings in the Review of Knowledge for Action, data collected from conversations with Music Forward's Program Coordinators across our eight regions, my conversations with practitioners in the field (schools, employers, and CBO's), and Music Forward's collective impact approach to executing its programs, I developed the following school partner criteria:

Exhibit 7

<u>School Partner Criteria</u>	<u>Points</u>
<p><u>KEY:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Blue background:</u> pre-requisite of MFF partners. • <u>Green background:</u> strongly preferred but not required. • <u>Points:</u> 100 points are required to position Music Forward as a convener or “backbone” of collective impact work. If MFF partners with a “90-point” school, MFF must work diligently to partner the school with industry. 	
• CTE or career-focused school model or academy within the school	20
• Arts, Media and Entertainment (AME) school/academy, or arts/performing-arts magnet; or STEAM focused school or academy	20
• 80% FRL or otherwise designated as a low-income school	20
• Initiatives and partnerships with CBO’s focused on wrap-around and related social services for students	15
• CTE or Magnet Coordinator (or director); strong communicator and champion of MFF partnership	15
• Initiatives and partnerships with AME-aligned industry partners	10

Deliver

After several site visits and conversations with Hollywood High School and the East Los Angeles School of Performing Arts (ELAPA), I began working with Jordan Kornzweig, AME Coordinator for the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), to identify pilot schools for our *Pathways Plus* curriculum. Since current students from Hollywood High School are the only students benefiting from *UForward*, and ELAPA students are new to our programs, we are

planning a sequence of programming (*All Access* followed by *UForward Bootcamp*) for these students in our efforts to forge long-term relationships and help these students prepare for the live entertainment workforce.

Moreover, I am currently in the process of preparing for a *UForward Bootcamp* launch in Las Vegas, Cleveland, and Dallas – the four regions which are home to our UForward programs.

Evidence

Evidence of the work I've completed for Music Forward consist of the following:

- The final “pathways strategy” PPT presentation (detailed above) will be submitted to Music Forward but only excerpts will be included in this Capstone.
 - The final “pathways strategy” includes a broad strategy for how Music Forward should approach its work in each MFF region, as well as a city by city analysis detailing the CTE climate in the state/region, recommendations for whether, when and how MFF should enter the pathways space in each market, and how the organization can best position its resources (human and otherwise) to facilitate pathways.
- *UForward Bootcamp* curriculum
 - The *UForward Bootcamp* curriculum is Exhibit A of the *Addendum*. It is the complete curriculum for the 3-day job-readiness module that I developed based on *UForward's* preexisting curriculum and my own experience/research.
 - Footage from *UForward Bootcamp* launch.
 - To be included in future iterations as a YouTube link.
 - Surveys from program participants.
 - To be developed and included in future iterations.
 - Plan for gathering statistics of interviews and jobs secured by *UForward Bootcamp* alumni.

- To be developed and included in future iterations.
- *MFF-LNE Pathways Manual*.
 - The Pathways Manual can be found in Exhibit B of the *Addendum*. It details the nature of the partnership between Music Forward and LNE's US Concerts, and Clubs & Theatres divisions, as well as provides detailed instructions to Program Coordinators and UF Facilitators for supporting this partnership, partially by best preparing our youth for potential interviews with LNE venues.
- Music Forward Industry Advisory Board first-meeting agenda and plan.
 - To be developed and included in future iterations.

V. Analysis (The Why)

To analyze how my strategic project evolved, it is useful to revisit my initial theory of action and examine the extent to which I met the conditions required to test my theory, and if possible, the extent to which my theory proved valid.

Throughout my process of constructing an RKA and building a research-base for my strategic project, I was able to successfully meet the first two of five conditions stated in my theory of action:

1. Leverage research from the field to gain support from Music Forward's Executive Director and Programs Director around narrowing the focus of our strategic partnerships with low-income schools to specifically target CTE schools focused on personalized instruction within arts, media, and entertainment, and who have robust partnerships within community-based organizations and industry partners within arts, media, and entertainment; and
2. Develop criteria for identifying and evaluating the aforementioned target schools.

To this end, it is worth zooming out of this research focus altogether to consider the following question: *why did my strategic project aggressively hone in on CTE when CTE was not a deliberate focus (or request) from the organization?*

There is little doubt that my convictions about the American public education sector shaped my thinking and approach to my strategic project. Specifically, my lack of faith in efforts to reform traditional public schools without a radical redesign centered on real-world challenges and careers, and delivered in an interdisciplinary, project-based, and multi-media learning environment that is grounded in kinesthetic pedagogy, was only exacerbated by an RKA which juxtaposed failing models with the transformative potential of CTE. My optimism regarding the burgeoning CTE

reform movement, a niche sector within the broader pie of American public schools, helped me form strong hypotheses from the outset about the way Music Forward should approach a national career-pathways strategy, and begin researching and testing these hypotheses.

Moreover, I began residency during a time in which there is a quiet but strong CTE movement happening across the nation, with California home to some of the nation's largest and most robust career-focused initiatives. With billions of dollars in state funding allocated to CTE year over year, and initiatives such as the California Career Pathways Trust (CCPT) created by Assembly Bill 86, the LA HI-TECH Grant, the state-wide Linked Learning initiative, California Partnership Academies, major public school district CTE departments, and more, my research and field interviews within the state and across the country affirmed time and again that CTE in California represented a bigger movement away from teaching and learning in the traditional classroom, and into a new conception of "vocational" education that sought to bring high academic rigor into a technical, hands-on, and real-world learning environment.

Conducting a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis of Music Forward from the perspective of its ability to impact a youth participants career trajectory illuminated the importance of partnering with strong CTE schools (See SWOT in "Implications" section). This is because when I analyzed MFF in relation to other key stakeholders, I realized that "we could only be as strong as our weakest link," as the old adage says (this is where the notions of "collective impact" and "vertical integration", detailed above, began to influence how I thought about MFF's role, and further convinced me that only CTE's with a robust AME focus and relationships with post-secondary institutions—or at least the desire and bandwidth to pursue these relationships—would need to be our focal point). The rubric in Exhibit 8 below, which served as one "pre-screening" mechanism that I developed to evaluate a region's readiness or "ripeness" for

piloting pathways, illuminates why I felt confident piloting in LA – which earned a “five star” rating – so quickly into my residency (more about piloting in LA below).

Exhibit 8

	Poor ★	Inadequate ★★	Adequate ★★★	Good ★★★★	Awesome ★★★★★
State/local CTE focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No focus No resources allocated toward CTE 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little focus and funding allocated toward CTE Little promise that CTE focus will change in short/medium term 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> State funding and policy is on par with states who are making CTE a priority 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding and pro-CTE policy is strong and visible at both the state and the local level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CTE leader at the state and national level, in terms of funding, initiatives, successful models, etc.
A.M.E.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No focus on AME k-12 AME industry weak or non-existent 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Little focus on AME k-12 AME industry weak 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some strong AME potential, including industry partner-prospects. Good cluster of AME-focused K-12 schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Vibrant AME industry with industry players who are engaging the community at-large. Several AME focused CTE schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large and dynamic AME industry with growing jobs. Easy access into industry for MFF. AME a priority in schools
MFF staff/partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MFF lacking robust partnerships No MFF staff capacity Poor CBO ecosystem (in general) from a collective impact standpoint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MFF lacking robust partnerships Little MFF staff capacity Opportunity for collective impact beyond MFF's capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MFF has partnerships and a community/network that is being nurtured year over year. Collective impact opportunities are visible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MFF has strong capacity, as well as partnerships and a network being nurtured year over year. Collective impact models are being executed already with opportunities for MFF to plug in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strongest capacity, partnerships and network Many opportunities for collective impact; easy for MFF to plug in. MFF uniquely positioned to make a difference.

Just as investigation into the first criteria helped me hone in on particular regions to assess their ripeness for partnership, so too did research into the second criteria help me think more specifically about what is required of successful school partnership. In order to further justify my school partner criteria (detailed in the section above), it is useful to reintroduce The Collective Impact Model:

The Collective Impact Model



Though I developed Music Forward's school-partner criteria before discovering the collective impact model, I nonetheless called for Music Forward to serve as a "backbone organization" and articulated many of the values – such as communication, shared vision, and common outcomes – that undergird the CI model. I conveyed to the management team that Program Coordinators – those responsible for "convening" – should be thought of (and perhaps, formally referred to as) "Pathway Coordinators." I argue that this symbolic shift (whether accompanied by potential concrete changes to job responsibilities or not) will help promote the shift in mindset, strategy, and action required as PC's become as intentional about the relationships and activities conducted with partners before programming, and the activities conducted post-programming, as they are about the programming itself. As champions of collective impact toward the "common agenda" of successful jobs or careers for our youth participants, our PC's must partner with likeminded leaders of career-focused organization's whose mission aligns with at least one critical phase in our pathway vision. For example, a CTE AME middle school partner is likely more concerned with exposure to career pathways versus job placement or work-readiness skills, whereas a CTE AME high school partner (or targeted community based organization) may be more focused on skill-building and job readiness. Based on its more holistic (or long-term) vision for its youth, Music Forward carries the burden of communicating our vision to promote "mutually reinforcing activities" and "common progress measures." The organization – led by the efforts of our Las Vegas-based Program Coordinator – has made great strides toward researching, identifying, and beginning to codify these common progress (or outcome) measures during my time as a resident. As it moves to codification, MFF must establish various sets (or stages) of "common progress measures" to match the various stages of a youth participant's career trajectory and their corresponding programming within MFF.

The third of the five criterion (or "if" statements): "supporting Music Forward's program coordinators in facilitating these partnerships," proved to be the most challenging and elusive of

my Residency. I use the word elusive because although I possessed the autonomy and freedom to schedule time and collaborate with program coordinators, numerous challenges prevented me from making this a priority. These challenges include the daily demands of piloting a program locally in LA, coupled with the fact that PC's work remotely and part-time, and work hard to delivering time-sensitive, high-impact programs for our organizations. As my Residency nears its end, I continue to believe that this is a necessary condition for my theory of action to be realized. However, I would have needed more time in my role in order to prioritize this condition.

I was able to successfully meet the fourth and fifth conditions of my Strategic Project:

- Revise preexisting programs and design new programs or initiatives to promote seamless transitions into career-pathway opportunities for Music Forward's youth participants and alumni; and
- Successfully pilot this initiative in Los Angeles, CA in partnership with LAUSD, secondary schools within the district, employers, and CBO's.

However, in realizing that condition three (centered on guiding PC's and scaling my work nationally) would require a successful pilot and longer timeline, my initial approach to my strategic project changed to prioritize a more near-term pilot. Namely, the initial discussions of my strategic project, there was a general understanding and agreement that I would spend the bulk of my residency preparing a strategy, and the last 2-3 months piloting the national project in Los Angeles. Within the first month, I asked Marjorie (ED) and Laura (Dir. Of Programs) for permission to begin "piloting immediately" which meant beginning to solidify partnerships with key stakeholders that would support us in designing unique, career-pathways opportunities for our program participants. This was a drastically different approach from my initial plan, although it didn't necessarily look very different (more below). My decision to take this route was partly intuitive, and partly because my philosophy on education impacted not only how I viewed my

strategic project for Music Forward, but also how I approached my own learning. Specifically, I would liken my initial plan to the way students in traditional public schools would be taught to approach a project: conduct extensive research, plan, prepare to launch, and then launch (or as I modeled above, “diagnose, design, and deliver”). But a more career-focused philosophy of education would advocate for “jumping into the fire” and learning through application, experimentation, and failures or successes.

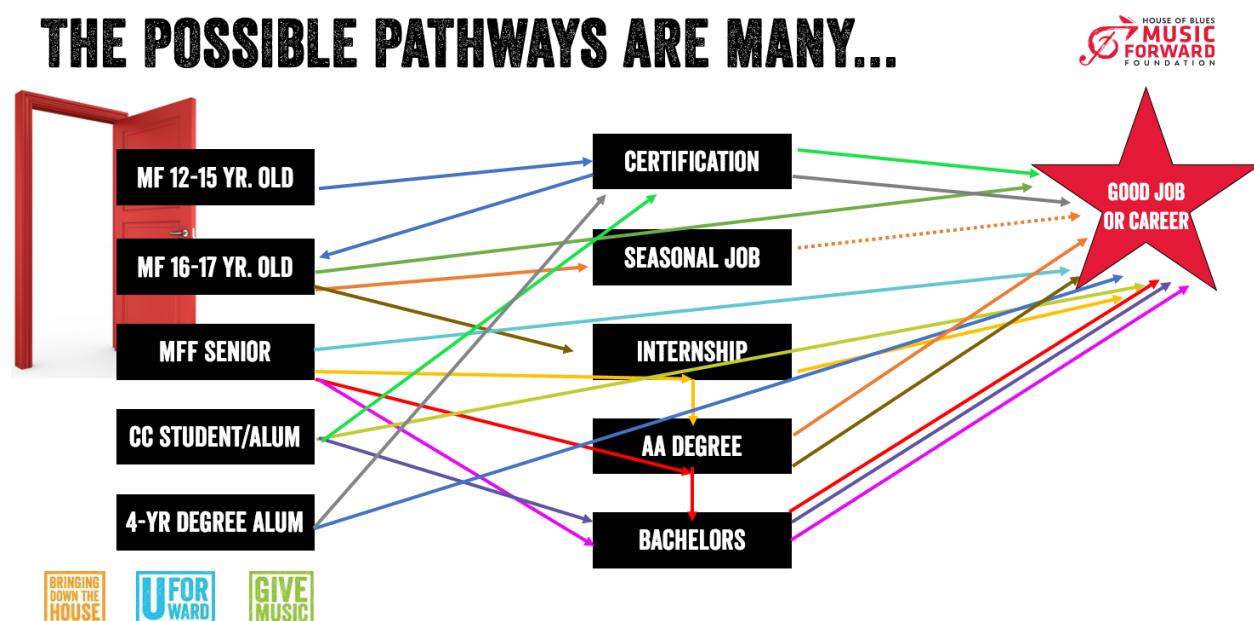
Fundamentally, I believed that this approach would require me to adopt a more aggressive and action-oriented posture, while still affording me the flexibility to pause and reflect on my direction, thus yielding deeper insights. In a sense, this decision was more about my intention than it was about the specific actions I was taking, because the same action applied in a “researching” state of mind versus a “piloting” state of mind would naturally produce two different experiences. For example, in the first several weeks I scheduled meetings with employers with the understanding that I was looking to interview them to gather insights about key skills that they look for in interns. I sensed that this often created a dynamic in which the employer felt that they were providing me something for nothing in return (this was evidenced by subtleties in body language and phrasing, such as “so, how can I be helpful to you?” which I commonly heard in these initial meetings).

However, when I began scheduling similar meetings with the understanding that I was looking to *explore the potential of a partnership* in which Music Forward would provide a robust pipeline of talent, I found that these meetings were much more helpful. I was still able to remain in the “researchers” stance when it was useful, but I also found myself on the other end of the interview, having to make a case for Music Forward’s vision to external stakeholders and answer poignant questions about the organization. Sometimes, I was ill-prepared for these questions,

which facilitated a healthy process a self-reflection and motivated me to dig deeper into Music Forward’s DNA. In other words, even though I was in a “pilot state of mind,” I was able to be a better diagnostician by remaining biased toward action, while beginning to lay the groundwork for potential future partnerships.

As I began to investigate all of the possible pathways that our alumni could potential pursue, I found myself in several deep rabbit holes of research. On one particular afternoon, Marjorie passed by desk and said, “oh wow...” then, as she continued to her office she half-jokingly offered, “that’s a lot of tabs. When I have that many tabs open that’s usually a sign to me that I need to pause and zoom out.” As I let her words marinate, I looked across my tabs to all the different potential partnerships, opportunities, career pathways, regions, and so forth that I was exploring, and felt quite overwhelmed. My initial PPT presentation gave me the opportunity to begin managing the enormous scope of my strategic project. First, I created the diagrams in [Exhibit 9](#) to help me visualize what was being represented by all the possible “tabs” that Marjorie warned me about.

[Exhibit 9](#)



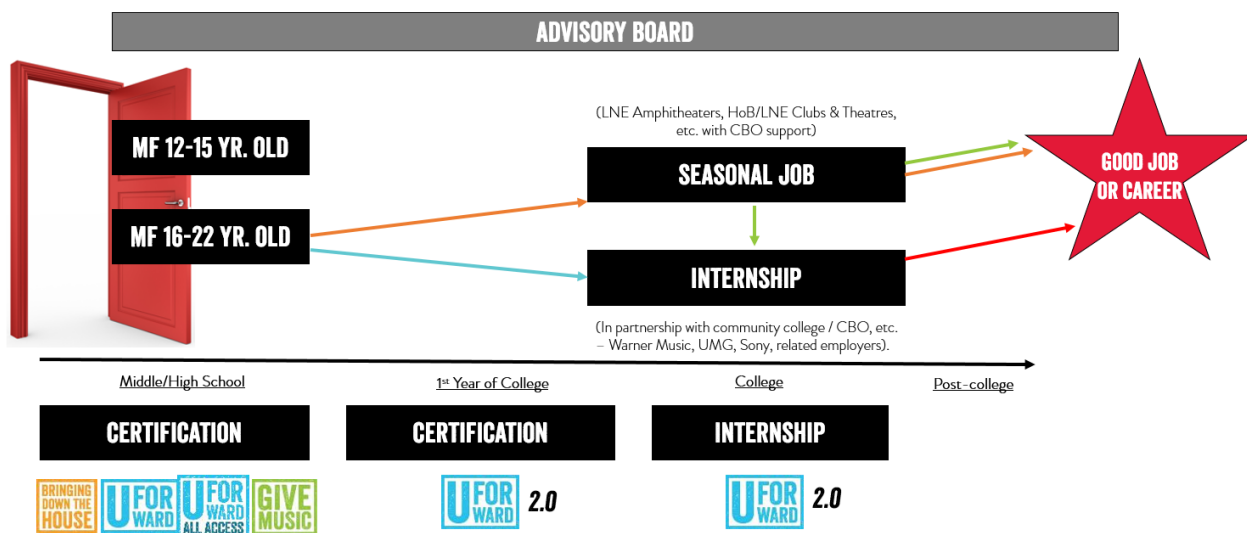
...AND WILL VARY BY MFF MARKET.



I believe these poignant visuals helped me best illustrate to the management team that a refined scope was essential. After a sequence of meetings, my project pivoted as reflected in Exhibit 10.

Exhibit 10

THE REFINED SCOPE



I believe this visual of our “refined scope” as an organization, and the conversations it inspired, allowed me to use the knowledge I gained from the first few months on the job to begin focusing on the “design” process of my strategic project. Specifically, I coalesced around 3 major project plans:

- a. *UForward Bootcamp* – intended to level the playing field among all MFF alumni (as discussed above)
- b. *MFF-LNE Pathways* – our partnership with Live Nation guaranteeing interviews to alumni of our programs
- c. *Industry Advisory Board* – the professionals within Live Entertainment as well as other key stakeholders (e.g. higher education and secondary schools) who will provide feedback and ongoing support as we develop pathway-related programs.

Finally, one more critical change was born out of my presentations. Marjorie handed the reigns of my strategic project over to Laura, which also meant that Laura become my direct supervisor. Given Marjorie’s breadth of responsibility and aggressive fundraising/development goals, coupled with Laura’s programs-specific expertise and relatively greater bandwidth to meet with me consistently and provide guidance, this felt like a natural, strategic choice. Meeting consistently with Laura proved to be greatly helpful for my project. While maintaining an autonomous work schedule was very important to me, weekly check-ins with Laura allowed me to strike a good balance between support and autonomy.

Moreover, the transition in focus came at a great time in my strategic project, which affirmed my decision to set the date for my research presentations quite early within my residency (I presented to the management teams in Mid-October, and then again in late October, and began residency on August 1). The first several months gave me adequate time to jump into the world of

CTE, learn a lot about the movement, as well as become comfortable with Music Forward and the world in which it operates. Presenting my findings before the beginning of November allowed me to refine my scope in time to begin putting the rubber to the road on key strategic projects (within the broader strategic project).

Ultimately, I believe my “then” statement – which is largely dependent on scale and national impact – could not be met without considerably more time invested into the third condition (again, centered on supporting program coordinators in their work), and thus my theory cannot be tested yet: “Then I will succeed in helping Music Forward to create career pathway opportunities for program alumni, which can be scaled nationwide, and better position the organization to scale its programming, increase its visibility and public profile, and raise funds from supporting institutions.”

Implications for Self

In early 2016, I was the first to secure my residency in Cohort 5; later in June, I suddenly found myself as the lone C5 member without a secured residency. By mid-July, two weeks after the large majority of my colleagues had begun their residency, all promising leads, except one that had been non-responsive, had shut the door; I was (seemingly) back at square one. August 1 – which was less than two weeks out – was determined as the last day I could begin work and still graduate with C5. I had come to terms with the fact that I likely wouldn’t graduate until November of 2018, and that my parents would not experience the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s grandiose graduation celebration – a day they looked forward to with much excitement. Perhaps more strange than my sudden turn of events was the voice inside telling me to sit still and not worry anymore about finding an opportunity. Weary of my own intuition, but wise enough to let it take the wheel, I stopped making calls and sending emails, and simply enjoyed the rare

opportunity to fellowship with family.

Days later, the House of Blues Music Forward Foundation called and confirmed their commitment to partnering with Harvard and inviting me on as a resident, with a starting date of August 1. My enduring faith in God, and trust in his timing – however seemingly at odds with my own – paid off tremendously. My faith was tested greatly this past summer and God delivered on a best-fitting opportunity. Despite feeling overwhelmed with gratitude, I nonetheless had concerns about coming to LA and Hollywood – a place often characterized by its “Godlessness.” I vividly recalled the feelings I had often tried to reconcile on prior visits to LA: the undeniable creative energy and visible opportunities that would attract any artist, juxtaposed with the spiritual void I felt. On my very first day as a Los Angeles resident, I had dinner at a seafood restaurant overlooking Santa Monica’s beach. While leaning over a balcony overlooking the rocks, sand, and the Pacific Ocean. It was a bright, sunny day, and I noticed a sign – reminiscent of those often held by panhandlers – wedged between the rocks with just enough shading to be legible:



I posted my reflections on Instagram:

I've always loved LA; my only concern about the city on past visits was that it felt spiritually empty. I didn't feel God's presence like I've felt it in other communities around the world. But the very first day I moved here, I was at a restaurant on Santa Monica beach

and walked across this. It was God's reminder to me that he's everywhere, that he's with me on my new journey, and that he's always a call away. God's Universe is always speaking to you in magical ways. You just have to listen.

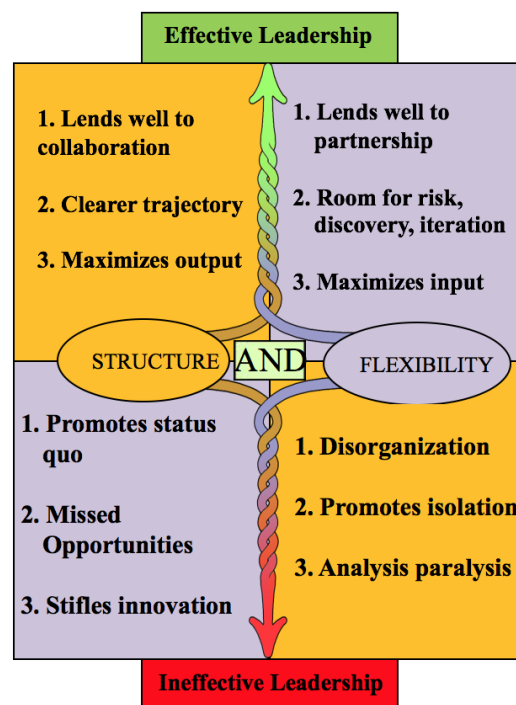
And yet, despite this divine affirmation, I found myself struggling to navigate my spiritual identity in the workplace. Namely, I felt “stereotype threat,” the phenomenon explained by Social Psychologist Claude Steele as the fear stemming from feeling at risk of conforming to stereotypes – especially negatives ones – about one’s identity group (racial, religious, social, or otherwise). I felt distrustful of how others would make sense of my Arab and Muslim identity, and thus found myself afraid to pray my afternoon prayer in the workplace, or enter conversations related to my race or religious identity. Concurrently, I felt deep feelings of shame and regret that I was not upholding my contact prayers, and ultimately my commitments to myself and to God, out of fear of how others may perceive me. Eventually, I began booking private conference rooms in the building across the street (Live Nation’s primary HQ), and soon thereafter began making the short drive home during lunch, where I could pray in private and commune with God without threat.

After developing a level of trust, building relationships within the organization, and gaining more confidence in my role, the threat largely dissolved. However, I was left reflecting on whether I would “lose the battle” to my stereotype threat when similar situations arise in the future, particularly when the aforementioned conditions (trust, etc.) are not met. Ultimately, I pray that I will prioritize my relationship with God above all others, and deepen my conviction that if I am to be condemned or lose an opportunity based on the stereotypes or judgments of another, then that was not an opportunity that was best for me anyway, regardless of what it offered.

Moreover, during our second Residency “Return Campus Visit” (RCV), Dr. Lisa Lahey introduced us to the concept of “polarities” and “polarity mapping” which proved to be a useful tool in making sense of my successes and shortcomings during residency. Dr. Lahey cited a

definition of polarities as “interdependent pairs (with two neutral or positively named poles) that need each other over time to achieve a greater purpose that both pole values share” (qtd. in Lahey, 2017). Several polarities were highlighted as examples; such as “confidence *and* humility;” “candor *and* diplomacy;” “grounded *and* visionary;” “accountability *and* freedom;” and so forth. The concept is as follows: in good leadership, it is critical to strike a balance between both poles, so as to possess both qualities and not disproportionately favor one over the other (or dismiss one altogether for the sake of embracing the other). As such, it is critical that both sides of the polarity are objective traits, or assets, lest we favor our tendency to demonize the trait that rests opposite of the one we favor. In the following visual, I map a polarity that was particularly useful for my own development and learning:

Exhibit 9



(Visual by Lahey, 2017 – content is my own)

As shown above, the left pole is “structure” and the right pole is “flexibility,” indicating

that leadership is most effective when there is both structure *and* flexibility. The top left quadrant is determined by answering the question: what are some assets of structure? The top right quadrant is determined by answering the question: what are some assets of flexibility? The bottom right quadrant is determined by answering the question: what are the downsides of favoring flexibility at the expense of structure (i.e. of being “too flexible”)? And the bottom left quadrant is determined by answering the question: what are the downsides of favoring structure over flexibility (i.e. being “too structured”)?

Throughout my strategic project, there were moments where I erred on the side of too much flexibility. Since Career and Technical Education (CTE) was largely a new subject-area for me, and I faced a considerable learning curve, the organic nature of my approach enabled me to take my time in the learning and diagnostic stage, and ultimately best position myself (in terms of competence) for the work I was tasked with. However, it also resulted in moments where it was not quite clear to management where I was heading, and when I would arrive (indeed, it was not always clear to me, either). Consequently, there were times where my executive director and supervisor seemed to question my organization, and push me to move toward action.

Ultimately, I think the “push” came at the right time and that my supervisors exercised patience and investment in my initial learning process. Nonetheless, I think I could have allayed their fears and demonstrated better leadership by presenting a vision and schedule up-front, and continuously modified it as my project evolved. Instead, my calendar centered on major milestones (with dates determined by me) and the distance between milestones were largely unstructured. At times, this flexibility best served my needs; however, at other times, it not only made my supervisor a bit on-edge, but admittedly contributed to my own stress and moments of feeling “in over my head,” or unable to juggle the developmental demands of multiple work streams amid

unanticipated set-backs and delays. I am grateful to have been introduced to the concept of polarities at such a critical juncture of my residency and professional career, and will rely on the tool to help me stay more “centered” in the future.

Finally, my passion for, and experience in music; the music business; Career and Technical Education (CTE); student-centered (or personalized) learning; STEAM-based schooling; and enacting a collective impact approach to serving youth in underserved communities; made Music Forward a perfect storm of the aforementioned topics, and my residency a passion-project. Ultimately, this residency helped to affirm and expand my own vision for how I’d like to contribute to the K-12 public education reform movement. As I consult with districts now and in the future, I realize how important it is to highlight the specific pedagogical philosophies – including personalized learning, STEAM education, and career-focused schooling – that are present (all at once) in many of the schools and school districts I am best positioned to support. Highlighting the interdependence of these various efforts in a way that is succinct and grounded in research will position me to communicate a value proposition, understand the philosophy of district or school partners, and ultimately bring my clients’ vision to life.

Implications for Site

Just recently, Music Forward’s Executive Director expressed that she intended to change the mission of the organization from “accelerating real-life skills for youth using music as the bridge *to success*” — to “accelerating real-life skills for youth using music as the bridge *to successful careers*.” Though subtle, the focus on “successful careers” versus the broader notion of “success” is symbolic of the organization’s growing commitment to provide robust career-focused programming and a pipeline into jobs and careers within live entertainment (as well as promising careers at-large). Aside from updating its mission, in just the last year Music Forward has expanded

its age demographic from 12-22 in order to formalize its commitment to supporting students beyond high school at the collegiate level, or in the workforce (previous demographic was 12-19); hired me to focus on career pathway initiatives, program design (or redesign), and strategy; solidified strategic partnerships at the collegiate level with organization's such as Gear Up in Los Vegas and Los Angeles; heightened its focus on career-pathways research by designating projects to the Las Vegas Program Coordinator and several interns; invested in professional development opportunities related to career pathways for its staff; secured a partnership with Live Nation's US Concerts and Clubs & Theatres divisions centered on hiring MFF alumni; launched a job readiness program (UForward Bootcamp); increased its allocation of summer interns slots available for UForward alumni; piloted its UForward program (focused on career-readiness) in three additional cities; and begun to infuse the language of career-focused schooling and collective impact centered on job readiness in staff meetings and in literature about the organization.

Importantly, while I was involved (or responsible) for a number of these initiatives, I was also not responsible for others, which demonstrates a broader commitment by the organization and its leaders to begin directing its energy, talent, and resources toward career-focused growth. Consequently, Music Forward is better positioned to deliver on its mission (even in its current form) of "accelerating real-life skills" for its program participants. However, several barriers – many of which are quite obvious to the organization, and others that require more careful investigation that may benefit from external support – remain critical to enabling the organization's growth. The following SWOT analysis is intended to capture just a sample of the key "Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats" as it pertains to Music Forward's career-focused ambitions and trajectory.

Exhibit 10

<p><u>STRENGTHS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared commitment to career-focused initiatives, including shared philosophy (commitment to career-focused partners and collective impact approach). • Talented leadership team with demonstrated commitment to organization's mission as evidenced by prior accomplishments, years w/MFF and perseverance through transitions. • Beneficiary of House of Blues, Ticketmaster, Live Nation, and others within the LNE Conglomeration. • Office in heart of Hollywood, underwritten by Live Nation, creating a level of credibility and accessibility to strategic partners. • High standard of non-profit governance, accountability, and fiscal responsibility as demonstrated by standing on Guide Star and related evaluations – strengthens fundraising position. • Strong career-focused programs that are fundable, attractive to industry, and seemingly / anecdotally working. 	<p><u>WEAKNESSES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors comprised largely of LNE executives who are “hands-of,” limiting potential funding sources and weakening MFF's fundraising position. • Fundraising position further weakened by MFF's affiliation with LNE which creates misperception that MFF has access to much more capital than it actually does. • Program Coordinator (PC) attrition and part-time nature of PC role does not support a vision for collective impact with PC playing the role of “convener” on the ground in communities. • Remote nature of role and limited budget compromises culture building / centralized PD • High dependence on LNE means potential cuts to philanthropic efforts can deliver surprise blow to organization (e.g. HoB decreased support in 2017). • Organization's evolving identity is reflected in marketing/messaging that can be misleading or absent altogether.
<p><u>OPPORTUNITIES</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish itself as premiere non-profit focused 	<p><u>THREATS</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of demonstrated program outcomes

<p>on career-pathways into entertainment; potential to be known as “best in the world” at leveraging music and live entertainment industry to accelerate real-life skills.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Despite being a beneficiary of LNE, the conglomerate has been largely untapped as a resource once compared to the type of investments other companies have made into non-profits operating “in-house”; MFF has yet to “strike gold” within LNE. • <i>UForward</i> and <i>UForward Bootcamp</i> programs have potential to become prototypes for schools nationwide seeking to introduce or bolster career readiness programs available to its students, and thus be funded or approached by major partners. • Focus on, and success within CTE AME schools can become a major proof-point for efficacy of personalization, student-centered learning, STEAM, and CTE within schools, and attract research studies to help measure program outcomes. • Since <i>UForward Bootcamp</i> is happening during school hours, this can be an opportunity or MFF to explore new opportunities to 	<p>weakens development/marketing and feeds damaging misperception that MFF is focused on music education.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient intervention for Program Coordinator attrition (such as making the role full-time and potentially increasing pay) can lead to talent drain and failure to realize collective impact strategy. • Budget cuts leading to decreasing or elimination of essential program and people, such as staff retreats, travel and professional development, and insufficient funds to staff a person focused on pathways (at least for the time being). • Long-term, affiliation with LNE can be both a gift and a curse, potentially leading to strong revenue streams, but also strong input/control from board members who may not share (or who may seek to stifle) Music Forward’s values/mission.
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support schools within the school-day, versus exclusively serving as a wrap-around service.	
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It is my hope that this SWOT analysis is a reflection of Music Forward’s current standing and priorities, and that addressing the many issues surfaced within the SWOT can best position MFF to “become known” over the next year as an innovative non-profit that is executing on its mission.

Implications for Sector

As alluded to in the “Conclusions” sub-section of the RKA, there is little question that the Career and Technical Education sector is still fighting the vestiges of Vocational Education. Namely, until the modern CTE movement is able to build a research base demonstrating positive outcomes for students that are superior to traditional public school models, it will have to fight through the deficit-based mindsets around VE – such as low-rigor and perpetuating class and race-based discrimination – that the CTE movement seeks to combat. Meanwhile, the CTE can leverage the interdisciplinary, project-based nature of its pedagogy to utilize the research from these reform efforts (including personalization and STEAM) to sway more reformers to model their reform initiatives after CTE. Indeed, CTE’s initial successes with regard to graduation retention and employment rates, especially as compared to comparable achievement outcomes of traditional public school students – while scientifically inconclusive – certainly point to the educative value of a still-evolving CTE model (Plank et. al., 2008; Packard et. al., 2012; Kreamer 2014). And yet, even these studies have their own limitations, given that CTE has evolved from “its initial mission to integrate manual vocational training into the secondary curriculum to meet the industrial needs of the nation” – and CTE advocates would argue that the new wave of CTE would demonstrate a far more promising future for our youth (Hamilton et. al., 2015; Fletcher, 2012).

To that end, it is hard to understate the opportunity that the state of California has to demonstrate to the country that CTE is a promising prescription for 21st century teaching and learning. While many regions are meaningful contributors to the CTE movement, few are as committed as California, and none are as focused on AME as Los Angeles, given LA's industry landscape and standing as a creative Mecca. California's policy reform and billions of dollars in state/local funding for CTE, coupled with its membership in (and support from) leading research institutions/initiatives such as Jobs for the Future and *Pathways to Prosperity* (born out of HGSE), position the state as a CTE trailblazer. In LAUSD alone, there are over 75 CTE schools designated as AME schools (and at least 100 more non-AME, CTE schools).

Therefore, multiple reform movements that have garnered momentum, such as interdisciplinary, project-based learning (known as "*Linked Learning*," in California – a major and highly-funded initiative), STEAM education, student-centered instruction, and more – coexist within hundreds of schools within California and the LA Unified School districts alone. This reality makes me optimistic about California public schools, especially CTE AME schools, to serve as prototypes for schools across the nation by leveraging the power of quality instruction and robust partnerships with non-profits and industry to support their work. For example, the program I developed during residency – *UForward Bootcamp* – can serve as a prototype for schools across LAUSD, and perhaps across the nation. This program can demonstrate that relying on industry experts to equip students with the essentials of job readiness (résumé development, behavioral interview practice, professionalism and career exposure) will enhance the mission of schools and districts to better prepare students for college and careers. Given that our pilot for *UForward Bootcamp* is April 5-7, 2017, I look forward to sharing survey results that will help measure the program's impact on students.

VI. Conclusion

Consider a simple social experiment: research the Pre-K – 12 education experiences of some of your favorite entertainers, inventors, engineers, entrepreneurs, scientists, activists, or other professionals. Where did they attend elementary, middle, and high school? What pedagogy or philosophy characterized these schools? In interviews or articles where they have been probed about their schooling experiences, what have they said? You may be intrigued to discover a similar pattern that I have: many of them are the product of non-traditional k-12 programs, such as Montessori or Waldorf K-8 schools, vocational and technical high schools (A few articles anecdotally trace this phenomenon, including one written by Peter Sims from the Wall Street Journal entitled “The Montessori Mafia”). While “Montessori” represents a specific, private school model, its student-centered approach can be likened to thousands of similar schools – private, charter, and public – across America and the world.

Perhaps most alarmingly, many more of these individuals were even high school dropouts, citing the irrelevance of traditional public school and the fact that they could not benefit from the innovative, student-centered models abovementioned. Google’s co-founders, for instance, attribute their chemistry and a great part of their entrepreneurial success, to the fact that they were schooled in Montessori (ABC via YouTube, 2010). Google’s hiring policies – which exceedingly prioritize real-world experience over educational success – seems to reflect the philosophies of its founders. Tony Wagner shares: “Google genuinely doesn’t care if you have a college degree anymore. But it’s not just Google. Dozens of employers are following suit. The world is really changing” (Wagner, 2015, personal interview; Detersmith, 2014).

My belief in the potential of CTE represents half of my enthusiasm about my project and experience at House of Blues Music Forward. This belief stems from evidence that

illuminates a strange but predictable, modern phenomenon, summarized as follows: while most scholars/practitioners today agree that public schools should better prepare students for careers; and while most would agree that CTE schools more closely resemble the kinesthetic pedagogy and hands-on curricula that create the conditions for students to achieve career readiness; most would *not* agree that CTE schools represent an ideal hub for innovation in public education. As mentioned throughout this capstone, this strange reality is understood through the history of CTE, which is fighting to disentangle itself from its roots and overcome the vestiges of vocational education – historically relegated as second-class and guilty of trading academic rigor for low-skill-job training. Modern CTE schools aim to promote real-world learning centered on mid to high-skill careers, and designed to equip youth with life and leadership skills without sacrificing academic rigor or pigeonholing students into specific career pathways.

The second half of my impetus centers on media education and my belief that STEAM education – including popular music/culture – produces the greenhouse effect of our generation's mental environment: there is not always a visible link between its omission and our crisis, but its harmful impacts are stark, and unconscious consumption enables its toxicity to thrive. More specifically, students are inundated with negative media on a daily basis that promotes materialism, misogyny, greed, and exploitation, while the alarming majority of schools do nothing to combat these forces through media-literacy and real-world education.

However, just as recycling can combat global warming, so too can media education – grounded within a career-focused and real world curriculum – combat toxic popular culture. Like recycling, media education (for example) can repurpose a product that would have originally harmed a student's mental environment and minimize its risk to her through awareness and action (i.e. her ability to critically evaluate and analyze the media she consumes). Positive music, for

instance, is like solar power – marginalized by the mainstream but effective and symbolic of a better future. Today, research suggest that music plays a major developmental role in molding identity. Studies also reveal that technology can predict, with mathematical certainty, how the qualities of a song may be manipulated to make our brains binge on music (i.e. produce a “hit”). Looking forward, I am determined to help tell a research-driven story that illuminates: a) the urgent need for student-centered, media-based education (i.e. media literacy) and b) the unique positioning of CTE AME schools to lead these research/curricular efforts. I believe and hope that organization’s like Music Forward will play a leading role in these efforts.

Appendixes

Appendix I: *UForward Bootcamp* Curriculum (Draft)

UForward Bootcamp Program

UForward Bootcamp is a 3-day job readiness program that features key components of *UForward* to prepare participants for job applications and interviews.

The following are the *UForward* **curriculum objectives**. These are a useful guideline for facilitators, but do not need to be communicated to participants. A broader goal will be communicated to participants, as indicated in the introduction below.

- Students will be able to (SWBAT) articulate the definition of a résumé, its purposes, and its key components, including common “do’s” and “don’ts”
- SWBAT create a résumé that will highlight their strengths and key experiences
- SWBAT identify and prepare a personal “pitch” that succinctly captures their career-interests and background
- SWBAT provide feedback to peers to help improve their pitch and résumé
- SWBAT understand the qualities of a behavioral interview and feel confident about their ability to answer common interview questions
- SWBAT empathize with the role of the employer in an interview in order to better position the student to succeed in an interview

The Curriculum

UForward Bootcamp Day 1 – The Résumé (3 Hours)

Welcome (5 minutes)

- Agenda
- Connect previous *All Access* experience to today (if applicable – almost always should be).
- Gauge student interest and program awareness: i.e. “Why are you here?”

Pre-Program Survey (15 minutes)

- Students complete survey.

Introduction (10 minutes)

- Ground students in the job market and career-focused schooling
- Introduce (briefly) students to *UForward*, and explain *UForward Bootcamp*

- State *UForward Bootcamp Program GOAL: To prepare you for a job by providing professional résumé and interview support.*
- Introduce yourself
- Orient them to the day's agenda/focus (i.e. Résumé's)

Work Readiness Certificate Application (20 minutes)

Briefly explain WRC process. Don't worry about covering all bases. Simply let students know that we are partnered with the LA Chamber and upon successful program/exam completion, they will receive a certificate signed by the Mayor of LA, and that they will be added to a listserv that will notify them of job opportunities and elevate their resumes to the top of the pile.

{10 MINUTE BREAK}

The Résumé Project – [Résumé Template & Action Verb List](#) (30 Minutes)

- MFF Facilitator will describe the planned process for creating a résumé and pitch for internships and entry level positions during the program
- Ask entire group the following questions to gauge participants' knowledge:
 - What is a résumé?
 - Have participants respond and give their answers
- A: Dictionary.com states that it is “a brief written account of personal, educational, and professional qualifications and experience, as that prepared by an applicant for a job.”
- What do you include in a résumé?
 - Have participants respond and give their answers
- A: Applicant's work history, education background, and personal skills
- A: An effective résumé lays out a summary of qualifications that will push the employer to move forward toward an interview.
- Have students pull up résumé template. Say: *Please pull up your email. This resume should be sitting near the top of your inbox. Please download it now, and save it to your desktop. Save it as First.Last-Resume. Save it to your desktop for now, for easy access. After you saved it, open it up.*

Peer Résumé Exercise – [Action Verbs](#)

Separate participants into pairs; using [Action Verbs](#) participants will discuss the following:

- Talk about one place you worked

- Talk about one leadership role
 - Talk about one award that you received
 - Talk about one achievement that you are most proud of
- Now begin every sentence with an **action verb** to describe those experiences. E.G. **Handled** all customer service complaints for...
- After pairs discuss accomplishments, MFF Facilitator will open up for large-group share-outs.

UF Internship Job Description & Résumé Guide (10 Minutes)

- Introduce and review **UF Internship Job Description**
- Facilitator will lead a short discussion of the elements of a résumé listed in **Résumé Guide**. Review specific elements of résumés.

Résumé Edits (70 Minutes – Includes feedback protocol)

- Students begin editing digital copy of resume. Facilitators provide differentiated instruction. Call on volunteer to craft a bullet. Students can work in pairs on this task.
- Ask: who has done a resume before and feels very confident in writing resumes? Put your hands down. Ask: Who doesn't feel very confident and would love support? Say: Those who were confident, please partner with somebody who may benefit from your support. But both of you work to help each other.
 - MFF facilitator will go over rephrasing experiences by naming the skills used, "I babysit my brothers" can be "I coordinate the care and safety of 3 children". Refer participants to **ACTION VERBS** for a list of action verbs to describe skills
- (~20 minutes in) Pair & Share – **Explain feedback protocol**. Then begin: where is my partner shining? Where may s/he improve? Facilitator to explain rules for feedback: be kind. Be specific. And de-personalize your feedback.
 - Facilitator should model feedback protocols.

Closing (5 minutes)

Only For UForward Bootcamp's Where There is Adequate Time In Between Sessions:

HOMEWORK: Student takes home a sample résumé with feedback and creates tentative final draft of their résumé! Submits to teacher (and MFF liaison).

UForward Bootcamp Day 2 – The Interview (3 Hours)

Welcome & Introduction (5 minutes)

- Orient students to today's agenda.
- What is a pitch? Explain pitch and elevator speech. Be brief. They will have exposure/practice.

Personal statement (20 minutes):

- Participants will be directed to work independently on creating a personal statement of future goals (either digitally if available, or via pen and paper)
 - Participants will e-mail the MFF facilitator their personal statement of future goals. Statement should be 3-5 sentences long
 - Personal statement should include the following elements, which will prepare students to transform their written statement into a verbal pitch:
 - Who are you?
 - What activities are you involved in?/What industries are you drawn to (or do you work in)?
 - What is your greatest strength/What do you do well? (Confidence)
 - What would you like to do? (Goal)
 - Why? (Motivation)

Pitch (On Personal Aspirations) (30 minutes):

With the help of MFF facilitator, participants will have 15 minutes to create and practice a “30 second pitch” that explains what they aspire to do.

- These two videos discuss an Elevator Pitch:
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDpe9StfGTA>
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5_wc7agBSZA

MFF facilitator will deliver a 30 second example pitch

- Students answer questions above to create their own pitch
- Few volunteers share pitch with entire group.
- Participants will then network with other participants to introduce themselves and practice their pitch

{10 MINUTE BREAK}

Complete WRC Math Skills Test & Polish Résumé Edits Part (45 minutes) –

- Participants complete WRC Math Skills Test
- Participants use any time leftover to make final edits to résumé

The Interview Project (50 Minutes)

- MFF facilitator will refer participants to [Interview Questions Digital Handout](#)
- Participants must select 8 questions from handout (2 from each category)
- MFF facilitator asks participants what questions they chose in order to see what questions were most popular
- MFF facilitator will demonstrate how to answer interview questions using [Interview Tips Handout](#)
 - Suggestion: Have MFF facilitator act out / interactive / visual examples of behaviors and responses
- Using [Interview Questions Digital Handout](#), participants will provide their short answers to their selected questions
- After they are finished, have participants break into pairs
- Participants exchange their questions with each other in order for each participant to practice their prepared responses multiple times
- Let participants know to practice and get familiar with all the questions on [Interview Questions Digital Handout](#)
- MFF facilitator will reference and discuss [Interview Tips Handout](#) Interview Tips
- Direct participants to [Interview Tips Handout](#) Practice Interview Checklist
- Briefly discuss checklist components and remind participants about providing constructive feedback
- Participants will be split into pairs and practice answering their interview questions
- MFF facilitator will come around to each pair and ask each participant a random interview question

Closing (10 Minutes)

UForward Bootcamp Day 3 – The Simulation (3 Hours)

9:00AM

Welcome & Introduction (10 minutes)

- Orient students to today's focus –final paperwork/exam for WRC and behavioral interview

Peer Interviews – (50 Minutes)

- *Distribute Interviewer Checklist to students. Students will practice peer interviews.*

10:00AM

WRC Customer Service Exam, Paper Application and Mock Interviews (60 Minutes Total)

GROUP 1: MOCK Interview | GROUP 2: WRC Customer Service Exam & Paper Application (30 Min)

SWITCH - GROUP 1: WRC Customer Service Exam & Paper Application | GROUP 2: Mock Interview (30 Min)

- Provide professional volunteers with [Interviewer Checklist](#) Handout
- Professional volunteers will act as interviewers
- Volunteers should be encouraged to also provide oral feedback during the interview process
- Completed Interviewer Checklist handouts will be collected by MFF facilitator

11:00AM

Customer Application Form (20 Minutes)

Full Group Tour (30 Minutes) (Or students re-take Math exam, if necessary).

- *Brief tour focused on professionalism. Workplace etiquette, do's and don'ts, etc.*

Networking & Closing (10 Minutes)

- Provide students UForward Links and orient them to resources moving forward.
- Guide them to LA Chamber resources (if applicable).
- Share contact info where they can reach out with future questions.

Students Depart at Noon

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